

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 107 391

RC 008 519

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TITLE The Chicano and the Meaning of Mexico.
PUB DATE Jun 75
NOTE 43p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rocky Mountain Council for Latin American Studies (Glendale, Arizona, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.76 HC-\$1.95 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; Cultural Background; Cultural Differences; Culture Conflict; *Foreign Relations; Foreign Workers; Government Role; *Intergroup Relations; *Mexican Americans; Mexicans; Political Attitudes; *Social Problems; *Socioeconomic Influences
IDENTIFIERS *Chicanos; Mexico

ABSTRACT

Two essential goals of the Chicano are: (1) achieving cultural pluralism and (2) equal opportunity. Success in achieving these aims will depend partly on the Chicano's uniqueness as a multinational person. Mexico's presence is of utmost importance for this endeavor. However, having a former homeland adjacent has not provided an example or inspiration to Chicanos for overcoming their problems in the United States. Mexico has offered the Mexican American very little direct assistance toward attaining his aims since the average Mexican is also poverty-stricken and preoccupied with physical survival, his government is largely disinterested in Mexican Americans, and the inter-American political scene is not conducive to intervention in the northern neighbors' affairs. Furthermore, the Chicano has not seriously sought the republic's direct support. Handicapped by low educational attainment and depressed conditions in health, housing, employment, and political influence, Mexican Americans tend to be preoccupied with local problems and programs. Yet, Mexico represents a cultural image or symbol on which the Chicano can anchor his Hispanic-mestizo personality. The Chicano can utilize his cross-national identity as a counterpoise between Anglo America and Latin America. Therefore, Mexican Americans should initiate a new and more positive association with Mexico and other Latin American republics. (NQ)

ED107391

THE CHICANO AND THE MEANING OF MEXICO

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Alamosa, Colorado

June 1975

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EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
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THE CHICANO
AND THE MEANING OF MEXICO*

The achievement of cultural pluralism marks one essential goal of the Chicano. Rejecting Anglo America's ethnocentric "melting pot" thesis, the Mexican American peoples¹ of this country are striving to attain their right of blending diverse American heritages without also facing discrimination by being

*An earlier version of this article was presented at the 1975 Annual Conference, Rocky Mountain Council for Latin American Studies, Glendale, Arizona. The author expresses his appreciation for the comments of other panel members and in particular, to Mr. Rudy de la Garza, the panel chairperson.

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For the purposes of this paper the terms Chicano and Mexican American will be used interchangeably. Although some authors describe the Chicano as youthful, assertive, nationalist, and supportive of lower income groups' aspirations, and Mexican Americans as older, less assertive, and middle class in viewpoint, these distinctions, while perhaps helpful in discussing the two varieties of Mexican-descended Americans in the United States, become blurred when their relationship to Mexico is compared. For example, Armando Rendon, Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, and others argue that Chicanos are or should be "more Mexican." A resumption of their ancestral virtues, they allege, will offer new pride and strength. The Teatro Campesino's Virgin of Guadalupe symbol likewise stresses this theme. In contrast, other writers assert that Chicanos are the most anglicized of Mexican-descended persons in this country. Manuel Servín, for instance, maintains the average Chicano is further acculturated and desires middle class status similar to other immigrant groups in past United States history. The Mexican American instead retains closer ties to Mexican culture. See Rendon, Chicano Manifesto (New York: Collier Books, 1971), 1-41, Gonzalez, Plan del Barrio, and Servín, "The Awakened Mexican American," paper presented at Rocky Mountain Council for Latin American Studies Conference, Missoula, Montana, April, 1973.

In order to set apart methods or viewpoints among Mexican American-Chicano factions, terms such as liberal and radical, moderate and extremist, or restrained and militant are used.

distinct. A further and related objective is equal opportunity. For this goal, Chicanos maintain, all persons should compete equally for careers and benefits and acquire in society a level commensurate with their talent and hard work and not with their racial or ethnic character. These aims, however, are extremely difficult to accomplish. For how can a separate ethnic group succeed in maintaining its uniqueness when presently it is very heterogeneous in culture and quite susceptible to acculturation and assimilation?

One answer perhaps may come from Mexico. Is the Chicano's cause advanced by the Republic's close presence? Can political and cultural inspiration be drawn from this direction for assisting a Mexican American renaissance in the Southwest? Or does this relationship render no advantage or even disadvantage to Mexican Americans? A nearly unexplored area in extant literature of Mexico and the United States, this complex but vitally important association deserves more thorough and systematic attention than present authors have accorded it.

The Chicano's Vision of Mexico

Unlike Black or Oriental Americans the ethnic distinctiveness of Mexican-descended persons in the United States is maintained and continually reenforced by legal and illegal immigra-

tion and by other contacts across the border.² This close proximity probably has slowed the rate of assimilation and acculturation for Mexican Americans.³ Hostility occurs between some Mexicans and Mexican Americans, nonetheless, when floods of illegal entrants from Mexico depress wages in this country and keep large numbers of Chicanos unemployed or unable to locate better jobs. In some regions the surplus labor problem has become so intense that some militants now advocate an "open border" in order to force improved working conditions for all laborers, alien and citizen.⁴

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Recent figures report 670,000 illegal aliens were apprehended by the Immigration Service and returned to Mexico in 1973 and 800,000 in 1974. Estimates for 1975 indicate an increased number of over one million individuals. Immigration officials believe as many as ten million illegals of all nationalities now reside in this country. Legal immigration from Mexico under permanent-visa status has increased in recent years to over 200,000 persons annually. Temporary work visas add 100,000 to 150,000 workers yearly. See "Interview with Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., Commissioner, Immigration and Naturalization Service," U.S. News and World Report, 77 (July 22, 1974), 27-30, and Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Rivera, The Chicanos: A History of Mexican Americans (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 217-235.

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Frank G. Mittelbach and Joan W. Moore, "Ethnic Endogamy--The Case of Mexican Americans," in Rudolph Gomez, The Changing Mexican American: A Reader (El Paso, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1972), 117-118, 121-122, 131-132.

4

"No Hay Peor Enemigo Que El Mexicano," El Chicano, 5 (January 26, 1972), 4. The case for and against deporting illegal Mexican laborers reflects ideological as well as organizational cleavages within the Chicano movement. In California, the United Farm Workers Union supports deportation and a stricter limitation of "green card" temporary U.S. work permits for Mexicans. In contrast, several Mexican American socialist groups favor protections and working rights for illegal workers in the United States.

In comparison to other ethnic groups, the Spanish-surnamed American is younger--one third were under 14 years in 1972--and poorer, exhibiting a medium family income of \$7,600 compared to \$10,350 for the entire nation. Despite evidence of educational improvement, with bi-lingual training, headstart programs, and college scholarships, the Chicano is well below average attainment in these areas. Depressed conditions also exist in health, housing, employment, and political influence. Because of these handicaps the Mexican American tends to be preoccupied with local problems and programs. His cultural and political horizons usually do not extend beyond the immediate milieu, making the presence of Mexico distant for the majority of Chicanos.

Politically the Chicano has been unable to form a common national or even regional front. Class, generational, personality, sub-regional, and ideological cleavages predominate instead. Historically differing migration patterns from Mexico, contrasting racial-cultural mixes of the migrating peoples, and diverse regional economies of the Mexican-settled areas within the United States have caused Mexican Americans even in the Southwest to vary significantly in culture. Despite efforts by the La Raza Unida Party, the United Farm Workers, the League of United Latin American Citizens, and other similar organizations, no strong national movement has appeared, or perhaps is likely to appear, because of the wide scope of these cleavages.

The Mexican American has not made a significant impact upon national policy despite this group's importance to the Democratic Party in the Southwest since 1930. As most Chicanos are liberal, they appear to have no viable alternative than to vote Democratic, although the Republican Party has attempted, unsuccessfully to date, to gain large numbers of converts. Therefore, Chicanos seem compelled to remain within the Democratic fold. Nonetheless, they have failed to exert a strong policy affect here because they cannot offer large numbers of voters in strategic urban areas, as Black Americans do, and they are unable to approximate the large sums of money to party coffers contributed by Jewish Americans. ⁵

A very limited number of Mexican Americans serve in capacities which affect this country's policies in either domestic or international areas. Minority group employment representation in the federal government over the past several

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The Nixon Administration sought Mexican American support primarily through the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People, headed by Henry Ramirez. This office has failed, however, to achieve an image independent of the Republican Party and it is criticized by Hispanic groups for its ineffectiveness. Martin G. Castillo, chairman of the Cabinet Committee, lauded Nixon's Equal Employment Opportunity Program of 1970 as an "unparalleled breakthrough" for the Spanish-surnamed. "Despite all the oratory about improvement," states Castillo, "the Spanish Surnamed employment in the Federal Government has hovered around 2 percent for the past ten years. This situation would probably continue without this type of action by President Nixon." See Cabinet Committee, Newsletter, 2 (October, 1970), 1-4, and "New Life for Hispano Cabinet Unit Seen," Denver Post, December 9, 1974, 12.

years has steadily increased from 19.1 per cent of the entire federal Civil Service in 1969 to 19.7 in 1972. This gain has occurred despite reductions in the total federal work force during these years. In 1969, 2.8 per cent of government personnel were Spanish-surnamed and in 1972, 3 per cent.⁶ However, because the Spanish-speaking people constitute approximately 8 per cent of the country's employed, goals of parity remain distant.

Employment figures for Spanish-surnamed Foreign Service Officers in the Department of State also lag behind total federal government ratios. In 1960 only 243 individuals, or 1.7 per cent of 12,933 FSO's, possessed Spanish-surnames. 1971 reports indicate an increase of such persons to 382, but only 2.3 per cent of total State personnel.⁷ Ranking officials charged with policy making toward Latin America almost completely were non-Spanish-surnamed. Of the 165 persons listed in the United States Government Organization Manual as holding important Department posts concerned with hemispheric policy since 1935, only two, Arturo Morales-Carrion, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, 1961-1964, and Joseph J. Jova, Ambassador

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United States Civil Service Commission, Minority Group Employment in the Federal Government, various issues. Also letter from Mr. Chuck Delgado, Chief of Programs, Research, and Development, Cabinet Committee, July 26, 1973.

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These figures are taken from United States, Department of State, Biographic Register of the Department of State, 1960, 1970.

to the Organization of American States, 1971-1973, represented the Spanish heritage; neither reflects Mexican ancestry.⁸

Present Mexican American affinity for Mexico is therefore reduced by labor competition between Chicanos and Mexican aliens and by the Chicano's relatively depressed socioeconomic and political conditions. Having a former homeland adjacent has not provided an example or inspiration to Chicanos for overcoming their problems in the United States.

Paralleling the "awakening" of the Mexican American in the mid-1960's, and perhaps an indication of attempts to further the general movement, radical Chicanos have sought stronger foreign political ties.⁹ In several instances, certain Chicano leaders have appealed to other nations' governments or to the United Nations for assistance in their demands upon United States authorities. Reies Lopez Tijerina, for example, urged Mexico, Spain, the Organization of American States, and

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In addition, few Mexican American students and academicians in United States institutions of higher learning have directed their scholarly interests toward the border areas or to Latin America. Only 11 per cent of Latin American Studies Association 1971 members were Spanish-surnamed and a significant majority of these taught languages and did not represent the policy science areas. See LASA, Membership List, 1971 (Washington, D.C., LASA, 1971).

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That more assertive factions occasionally turn to Mexico is not to say that moderate groups in contrast have ignored the Republic. For since arrival to this country, many Mexican Americans have retained sentimental attachment for areas south of the border. Moderates, however, do not seek cultural and political advancement from this association to the extent that some radicals now are attempting.

the United Nations to place pressure upon this country to correct alleged violations of land grant provisions in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. "Corky" Gonzalez likewise has suggested that the United Nations administer a plebiscite in the Southwest as a solution to Anglo American discrimination against Chicanos.¹⁰

Chicano activists are vocal in criticizing United States policy toward Latin America and the less developed world. The La Raza Unida Party as well as several militant conventions have advocated the independence of Puerto Rico. Radicals have traveled to Cuba in support of programs there and protest alleged CIA intervention against the government of Salvador Allende in Chile. Armando Rendon has asserted that Chicanos eventually will align more directly with revolutionary hemispheric forces:

In a few years. . . Latin Americans will become aware of the presence of an ally in its relations with the United States. The Chicano will see to it that never

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During Mexican President Luis Echevarria Alvarez' visit to the United States in June, 1972, Chicano activists picketed the President's temporary residences in San Antonio and Los Angeles, protesting against alleged political prisoners held in Mexico City's Lecumberri Prison and the government's repressive actions against Mexican students. President Echevarria, meeting with the San Antonio demonstrators, promised to allow an inspection of the prison by a Chicano delegation and voiced opposition to the discriminations suffered by Mexican Americans. However, he also declared that Mexico would carefully refrain from involvement in United States domestic affairs, refusing in one instance to sanction the boycott of non-union lettuce. See Graciela Mendez, "La visita de presidente Luis Echevarria Alvarez," La Raza, 1 (September, 1972), 52.

again will [the United States] offer only gringo-
ismo to the brother nations of the Western Hemisphere.¹¹

Increasingly evident is the sympathy shown by some radical groups for all Third World peoples in their struggles for self-determination and against "colonialism."

Nonetheless, Mexican American travelers to Mexico often are disillusioned by what they observe on arrival. One commentator, shocked by neglect for its people by the government, offers the following advice to his readers:

Let's not look to Spain or even Mexico to help solve our present problems that we're having in the United States. A short stay in any part of the Republic of Mexico should be enough to convince you that Mexico has nothing to offer us in the way of solutions to social problems in the United States. The disparity between the affluent and the poor in Mexico is so flagrantly obvious. The sickness, the disregard for human dignity by the people in public service and all of the corruption which comes from a government which is complacent with its mediocrity, this is what you'll find in present Mexico. If you feel I'm too critical take a trip into Mexico yourself and find out.¹²

Chicanos also decry the existence of Anglo American cultural and economic penetrations south of the border and they ridicule Mexicans for accepting an alien materialism and commercialism. (Many Anglo Americans take a similar position).

Most Latin American governments are described by militants as being dominated by wealthy hispanized elites and United

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Rendon, op. cit., 318.

¹²

Jose de la Pena, "El '16' de septiembre," El Chicano, 5 (September 15, 1971), 3.

States business interests. These radicals and some moderates detect little difference between the current political situation in Latin America and that in the United States where similar types of people, the Indian and the mestizo, are seen to be subjugated by closely aligned elitist and racist-ethnocentric political systems. ¹³

Some Mexican Americans apparently suffer discrimination from Mexicans. For example, one source reports:

If the visitors are recent migrants-made-good, then they are treated as Mexicans. But when Chicanos arrive, they often speak broken Spanish, their clothes and habits are strange, they seem as different from Mexicans as they do from Americans. . . 'The Mexicans call us ignorant if we try to speak Spanish and presumptuous if we speak English,' Jose Angel Gutierrez, leader of the Partida Raza Unida. . . ' said during a visit here. ¹⁴

Chicano students in Mexico likewise encounter prejudice, and often they are accused by radical Mexican youth of being tainted by North American imperialism. Local Mexican dialect and customs, usually distinct from those of the Mexican American, also set the United States student apart. Moreover, local resentment arises because Mexicans believe Chicanos

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See "Massacre in Mexico," El Grito del Norte, 4 August 20, 1971), 17-18, Rita Luna Lujan, "La Lucha en Mexico," El Grito del Norte, 6 (March, 1973), A, B, and "Mexicans, Chicanos Have Too Few Common Interests," El Chicano, 7 (March 1, 1973), 16.

¹⁴

Ibid. "Mexicans, Chicanos Have Too Few Common Interests,"

come to Mexico not to assist the downtrodden there but instead to learn more about themselves and how they are to overcome their problems in the U States. ¹⁵

In reaction it is sometimes stated that Chicanos are becoming culturally and politically distinct from their Latin American brothers, emerging rather as "separate entities" whose new identity is unique to the Americas. In this vein Rudy Acuña argues:

The Mexican American has reached the point where he has become distinguishable from his brothers to the south, and he should be treated as a separate entity. While forging their new identity, Mexican Americans are evolving new ideas and arts which will contribute significantly to the American nations as a whole. ¹⁶

Such a declaration of independence represents a new spirit of confidence and maturity which did not exist among earlier generations of Mexican Americans who maintained closer ties with Mexico.

With the exception of radicals' occasional appeals to

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A group of Chicano students enrolled at the University of the Americas near Cholula, Mexico, designed and submitted a questionnaire about the Mexican American to several classes at the Universidad de Puebla. They encountered a great amount of hostility, in part because the Spanish language of the survey was judged to be poor and thus offensive. Likewise, the students were at first linked within the guise of anti-Americanism. This writer found the Mexican Americans at the University of the Americas unable to attract Mexicans and other Latin Americans to their La Raza club. Instead, the bi-national student body continued to be separated according to country and curriculum lines despite efforts to group Mexicans and Chicanos together.

¹⁶

A Mexican American Chronicle (New York: American Book Company, 1971), 1.

Mexico and elsewhere, no strong political attachment currently is evident from the Mexican American perspective toward the Mexican and Latin American peoples. And cultural and sentimental ties appear to be waning particularly for later generations of residents in the United States. It would be difficult to locate a widespread Chicano commitment to the southern republics which parallels the Jewish American support for Israeli sovereignty or even the Black American advocacy of Black self-determination in southern Africa. Why is there lacking a similar Chicano response for the acute problems of their ancestral brothers when Mexico stands adjacent to this country and the Mexican American retains closer ethnic ties to this cultural source than other minorities do to their former homelands? Several explanations for this absence of a strong relationship might be offered.

First, Mexican Americans hardly are in a position to advocate the causes of other American republics. For unlike the Jewish American they lack affluence and political power, and must place priority upon improving their own local conditions and opportunities within the United States. Likewise, being less unified and concentrated regionally, they have been unable to exert significant political influence to compare with the recent successes over policy direction achieved by American Jews and Blacks.

Secondly, unlike other immigrant groups arriving in this country--for example, the Irish, Germans, and East Europeans--the Mexican generally has made no attempt to alter policy toward his past homeland. One clue for this divergence may lie in the national rivalries and the extent to which these rivalries have affected nationalistic fervor among later immigrants to the United States. European nations experienced centuries of international hostilities which became embedded in popular cultures.¹⁷ For instance, the Irish fought the English, many Eastern Europeans distrusted both Germans and Russians, and the Germans desired a unified nation. None of these antagonisms negatively affected America, and immigrants from such areas could be transplanted here without difficulty. Republican Mexico of the 19th century in contrast did not enjoy sufficient time or unity to develop ardent patriotism among its citizenry. Hence, later refugees traveling northward could not carry with them deep-seated psychological involvement in Mexico's international problems similar to the Europeans. Moreover, the Republic faced the United States as a serious enemy during the period, suffering

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See Paul Seabury, "Racial Problems and American Foreign Policy," in George W. Shepard, Jr., Racial Influences in American Foreign Policy (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 60-78, and Lawrence H. Fuchs, "Minority Groups and Foreign Policy," Political Science Quarterly, 74 (June, 1959), 161-175.

defeat in the border war of the 1840's. Obviously it was risky for these immigrants to maintain hostility toward the country in which they were to make new residence. In sum, Mexican Americans did not or could not retain former nationalistic biases as other immigrant peoples frequently did.

Thirdly, many Mexicans came to this country for promises of opportunity and a large proportion of them arrived with the intention of eventually returning with substantial earnings to their place of origin. Rendon labels this tendency a "repatriation syndrome" which caused Mexican Americans to be less interested in United States policies and local conditions, even though Anglo Americans discriminated against some of them.¹⁸

Fourthly, Chicanos today possess higher living standards than do average Mexicans despite continued evidence of prejudice and wrong treatment confronting them. Rendon's criticism of the "repatriation syndrome" held among Mexican Americans reflects this situation. That the image of Mexico continues to be unimportant under these circumstances indicates that Chicanos are opting for success in the United States. A return-to-Mexico movement would show pessimism and worsening local conditions perceived among Chicanos, trends which apparently are not occurring presently.

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Rendon, op. cit., 19-23.

There is strong evidence that Mexican Americans are assimilating and acculturating rapidly into North American culture, setting a pace similar to other immigrant peoples in eastern and midwestern states. According to the Mittelbach and Moore study in Los Angeles, Chicanos who were female, later post-immigrant generation, and of higher occupation status married outside of their ethnic group in rates of over 50 per cent.¹⁹ No proof exists that either nationalist appeals of militants to discourage intra-marriages or large numbers of recently arrived Mexican nationals to this country have slowed this integration rate. In fact, it could be suggested that these two factors may stimulate assimilation and thus cause further cleavages in the Mexican American community. In any case, more acculturated persons tend to overlook ties with Mexico.

Chicanos have adopted many common negative images of Mexico held by Anglo Americans which encourage them to disregard Mexican culture. It would be difficult for any person living within United States educational and mass media currents to avoid contact with these stereotypes. And visits to

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Mittelbach and Moore, op. cit., 122. The Grebler, Moore, and Guzman study makes a similar conclusion. They state that ". . . length of residence, education attainment, occupation, and income--rather than country of origin--were the main determinants of differences in rate/s/ of naturalization." Leo Grebler, Joan W. Moore, and Ralph C. Guzman, The Mexican-American People: The Nation's Second Largest Minority (New York: Free Press, 1970), 560.

the Republic may reenforce these negative biases. Hence, when the Chicano desires to clarify his current ethnic identity but possesses a disdain for the core source of this character, he psychologically reacts against Mexican ties. The Mexican American also displays a sense of his own cultural limitations when confronting the Mexican, especially when the latter is educated; this reaction likewise restricts his interest in Mexico.

Finally, no "special relationship" exists between the Mexican American and Mexico because United States authorities place hemispheric events on a very low priority,²⁰ a policy which discourages interest in the area by Chicanos and non-Chicanos alike. European nations usually receive highest official consideration, particularly as given by conservative leaders who assert "Atlantic nation" status for this country. Public awareness of Latin American problems is also preempted by more visible (and perhaps more immediately important) occurrences in the Middle East, southern Africa, and southeast Asia. Except for the Soviet challenge in Cuba during the early 1960's which helped to create the Alliance for Progress, and the former Salvador

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A penetrating review and analysis of the Nixon Administration policy toward Latin America is done by Yale H. Ferguson, "An End to the 'Special Relationship': The United States and Latin America," Revista/Review Interamericana, 2 (Fall, 1972), 352-387.

Allende government in Chile in the 1970's, no visible threats to survival or national interests for the United States or individual republics are transpiring in the region to attract special concern by Mexican-descended citizens of the United States.²¹

Therefore, the meaning of Mexico as perceived by a majority of Chicanos is vague, ambiguous, and more negative than positive. For attaining the objectives of cultural pluralism and equal opportunity in this country, Mexican Americans have been unwilling or unable to utilize the significance of the Republic as a cultural anchor as well as a political inspiration. A contrasting perspective of this difficult yet potentially rewarding relationship lies in the Mexican view of the Chicano.

Mexicans View the Chicano

Mexicans encounter many of the problems which presently also confront Chicanos. There is yet no true Mexican nation-

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According to one view, United States involvement in Black Africa reflects more a European than African milieu. For Portugal has gained support for its African policies in return for United States military use of the Azores bases which link America to Europe and the Middle East. The remaining areas of Africa receive even a lower policy priority than does Latin America. However, unlike the Chicano and his relationship to Latin America, the Black American continues to protest alleged colonial repression in southern Africa. See John Marcum, "Southern Africa and U.S. Policy: A Consideration of Alternatives," in Shepard, op. cit., 186-216.

al identity; and present class and regional disparities are becoming more apparent with recent inflation, unemployment, marginality, and the recurring crises of political legitimacy. Since the turmoil of Tlatelolco in 1969, institutionalized revolutionary politics is no longer a national unifying factor. Therefore, the search for an identity and for socio-political rights which preoccupies the Mexican American faces the Mexican as well. When the Chicano looks toward Mexico for inspiration and assistance in resolving similar problems in this country, he must understand the average Mexican's poverty, cultural cleavages, and lack of direction within Mexico.

Despite impressive industrial expansion, the Mexican economy also contains vast numbers of unemployed and underemployed persons, with some estimates of the former extending well over 30 per cent. Among other difficulties, food and land are becoming scarcer and Mexico's population growth is one of the highest in the world. Living standards for marginal or poverty-stricken people have not improved since World War Two. The affluent United States promises survival for many Mexicans and is attracting waves of illegal entrants from the south. In this environment it is difficult for Mexicans to sympathize with Chicano demands for cultural and political privileges when they realize that wage and benefit parity for the two countries cannot be achieved with the near future.

The Mexican political system falls far short of earning recognition as a democracy despite the Republic's increasing suffrage, its opposition parties, and the maintenance of a progressive constitution. For example, the nation's Indians encounter ethnic discrimination and face possible loss of past heritages because of the government's assimilationist policies. No bi-lingual education is permitted for the benefit of these peoples; the most successful tribes are those which acculturate.²² Politics are controlled largely by business factions and the military, both of which favor moderation and stability. Evidence of widespread corruption, favoritism, and repression is reported. Authorities also are very suspicious of radicals,²³ partly in reaction to recent urban and rural terrorist movements, and the leadership quickly moves against students and others who may adversely affect political continuity. It is to this ethno-

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Ralph L. Beals, "Mexico's Persistent Indians," Current History, 20 (May, 1974), 204, 231-232.

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Mexican border officials also prohibit the entry of suspected extremists from the United States. For example, an acquaintance of the author was a leader of an anti-Vietnam protest which occupied a military science building on a university campus. He was not permitted to cross the border into Mexico after the government became aware of his actions. In 1964, Mexican authorities blocked a caravan of Chicanos led by Reyes Lopez Tijerina which was destined for Mexico City in order to protest the land grant problem in the United States. Tijerina was quickly given plane passage back to this country; the remainder of the caravan also received orders to return to its place of origin.

centristic, often repressive, environment which the Chicano must respond. Representing primarily a liberal and democratic background, he suffers from the negative example of Mexican politics. Moreover, under these adverse conditions, the Mexican liberal has been unable to provide cultural, economic, or political leadership to Chicano brethren north of the border.

Traditionally, Mexico's foreign policy emits the tenets of liberalism, advocating self-determination, non-intervention, the juridical equality of states, and other similar values. Revolutionary causes and leaders of other countries except the United States usually are welcomed and supported by official actions. The Mexican government has continued to recognize Cuba's Castro regime, at times alone among hemispheric powers. However, in practice the Republic's foreign relations with the United States restrict an increased interchange between Mexico and the Chicano. First, Mexico's security obviously depends upon good relations with the United States. No interests can be served, therefore, by intervening on behalf of its former citizens when such actions could antagonize Washington and perhaps encourage this country to reciprocate by intervening as well. Secondly, Mexico is tied closely to the United States in trade, labor investments, and tourist revenues despite official efforts to reduce this dependency relationship. In both cases,

Mexico's policies must be focused toward Anglo Americans instead of Chicanos in order to fulfill their basic foreign objectives.

Mexicans are not well informed about Mexican American conditions or affairs in the United States although national newspaper coverage is thorough and sympathetic when major Chicano events occur.²⁴ Unfortunately, little in-depth analysis by commentators is available with the single exception of a series of Excelsior articles written by a journalist who traveled extensively in the Southwest for this newspaper.²⁵ An increasing curiosity is exhibited by the more aware Mexican public toward the Chicano, even to the extent of affecting some current dress styles and other fads.

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This author observed a Mexican-produced film pertaining to the California outlaw and Chicano hero Joaquín Murietta. Unlike some Chicano versions romanticizing this person and condemning all Anglo Americans who pursued him, the Mexican approach, whether historically true or not, instead was much more balanced. It depicted Murietta as being duped by "bad" Mexicans; in some cases the hero's reputation actually was salvaged by certain Anglo Americans.

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See Excelsior, several issues, May, 1974. Some standard Chicano literature is available in the larger Mexican bookstores in either English or Spanish editions. However, very few original studies have been authored by Mexicans which deal with Mexican Americans. In this author's opinion, many of these accounts rely too extensively upon only Chicano opinions and contribute little to a description of Mexican assessments of the movement north of the border. See for example Gilberto Lopez y Rivas, Los Chicanos: una minoria nacional explotada (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1971).

Similar to Anglo Americans, Mexicans unfairly stereotype the Mexican American in the image of a depressed "wet back" and farm laborer although a large majority of Chicanos now reside in urban areas and have broken employment ties with the agrarian sector. ²⁶ Resentment is directed against the Chicano because it is felt he has no interest in assisting the Mexican. Instead, Mexicans believe the Mexican American has deserted his former homeland for the affluence of a culturally different nation. And when the Chicano returns to Mexico, many of his previous brothers contend that he does so to help himself only. ²⁷ These antagonisms are worsened when the Mexican laborer in the United States is cheated and maltreated by the Mexican American.

It would be difficult to determine which social stratas in Mexico might assert more intimate political and cultural ties with the Chicano. The Mexican higher income groups, who in many cases tend to be more hispanized also, would certainly not fraternize with mestizo and radical Chicanos. These affluent Mexicans attach themselves more closely to

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For an insightful analysis on the origins of negative stereotypes of Mexicans which were inherited eventually by Chicanos, see Manuel Servín, "The Beginnings of California's Anti-Mexican Prejudice," in Servín, The Mexican Americans: An Awakened Minority, 2nd Edition (Beverly Hills: Glencoe Press, 1974), 2-17.

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These resentments were related to the author by both Mexican and Chicano students in Mexico. In fact, the pejorative term "gabacho," used in the United States against the Anglo American "foreigner," was instead a description of the Chicano "sellout."

Anglo Americans than to any Mexican American segment. Latin American middle classes, probably the closest potential ally to most Chicanos, are now becoming increasingly hispanized, but still tend to be politically fragmented and disenfranchized, and seek to imitate elite classes culturally and politically. Therefore, Mexicans of this description also might discourage closer associations with Chicanos. Likewise, despite closer mutual interests in some cases, it is doubtful whether the marginal peoples of the Republic could easily find a close relationship with Mexican Americans. These are the Mexicans who journey northward across the border for employment and become economic rivals of Chicanos. Furthermore, the average villager is conservative, pessimistic, and suspicious of outsiders, be they of Mexican descent or "gringos."

Much time has elapsed since the Mexican American or his forefathers departed Mexico for this country, and their life styles have shifted as rapidly in the United States as have those of their brothers who remained behind. For example, words, speech dialect and slang change, and national heroes and events differ; even cultural attitudes toward politics become contrasting. In these ways, the Mexican and the Chicano association has suffered after each has

traveled on varying paths in time and space. ²⁸

Some Mexican intellectuals have taken a renewed interest in their former countrymen. Jose Vasconcelos, Samuel Ramos, Octavio Paz and other writers, in their attempts to delineate the Mexican personality, have extended their philosophical horizons across the border. For example, in the Labyrinth of Solitude by Paz, the Pachuco youth in the United States is portrayed as an extreme character variety of the Mexican himself. "Whether we like it or not," Paz asserts, the Pachucos "are Mexicans, [and] are one of the extremes at which the Mexican can arrive." ²⁹ According to this author, the Mexican in the United States faces and reacts to similar personality crises which likewise confront the Mexican in Mexico, thus linking the two peoples in similar "masks" in

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For example, many descendents of earlier settlers from Spain and Mexico, particularly in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, today converse in an antiquated 18th and 19th century Spanish dialect. A further example relates to a Mexican professor teaching at the Colegio de Mexico, Dr. Lorenzo Meyer, who told the author of his amazement in hearing out-of-date rural and small town Mexican slang spoken in southern Colorado which would be very unusual to find in most areas of present Mexico. Finally, it might be noted that Gonzalez' epic poem, "I Am Joaquin," avoids any further description of Mexican affairs after the 1910 Revolution.

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Labyrinth of Solitude (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 14. The term Pachuco is of unknown origin. Paz describes one variety, the "zoot suiter" of the 1940's. Chicanos have taken a new and rather romantic interest in this character as a precursor to present-day militants.

order to cope with man's basic condition of "solitude." Another author, Adolfo G. Dominguez, a former Mexican consul in this country, probes the origins and politics of the Chicanos and criticizes them for neglecting their original tie with Mexico. Dominguez strikes a common theme by Mexican commentators when he suggests that Chicanos will not achieve ultimate success in their struggles if they forsake the heritage of their motherland.³⁰

Revolutionary and more assertive reformist groups in Latin America have sought contact with radical Chicano movements and, according to one activist source, have taken more interest in the militants of this country than Chicanos have given to Latin American upheaval.³¹ Mexican extremists contend that revolution in the United States must take place first before successful radical change is possible in other countries, for in Mexico and other strategic areas, present United States authorities would intervene and prevent extremists from remaining in power. Chicanos, therefore, repre-

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"El chicanismo: su origen y actualidad política," Cuadernos Americanos, 175 (Marzo-Abril, 1971), 64-76. In a Chicago speech President Echeverria urged Mexican Americans "not to change their nationality" and to return to their homeland if they felt it profitable. He further advised his listeners to retain their Mexican identity while sharing their present communities. New York Times, June 19, 1972, p. 10.

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Lujan, op. cit., B. However, allegedly, some Chicanos have sent money and weapons across the border to support Mexican terrorists.

sent a very vital factor in advancing permanent and thorough hemispheric change, according to these contentions. Knowledge of these contacts, nevertheless, has made other governments wary of activists from the United States. Mexico, for example, has cooperated closely with this country in investigating Chicano leaders, such as Tijerina, and Chicano organizations, and in preventing some of their activities from spreading beyond the border.

Despite this official action to deter the Chicano militant, the Mexican government has made efforts to maintain good relations with the Mexican American. President Echeverria's speeches in the United States have been one indication of this concern. From time to time Mexican government officials have intervened where possible on behalf of Chicanos and extended sympathy for their cause.³² A more recent official

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One example is the Mexican consul in Los Angeles who testified on behalf of several Mexican American youth during the Sleepy Lagoon case grand jury. In earlier decades of this century Mexican consuls sought to discourage naturalization of its nationals residing in the United States because the Republic could no longer offer protection to its countrymen. These officials' patriotic and cultural ideologies also motivated such actions. Grebler, et. al., op. cit., 560. However, the Mexican government has not considered the treatment of Chicanos a major international contention. Recently, Foreign Minister Emilio Rabasa announced that the illegal migrants question represents the last significant issue between the two countries. "U.S. Gets Protest on Braceros," Denver Post, June 21, 1974, p. 11.

policy has attempted to attract Mexican American tourism to Mexico. Finally, one commentator goes so far as to suggest that Mexican leadership frequently encourages closer ties among Mexicans and Chicanos, "feeling that one day [Chicanos] might become a Mexican pressure group within the United States in the same way as American Jews lobby for Israel." 33

Nevertheless, Mexico's vision of the Mexican American continues to be distant, conflicting, and more hostile than amiable, closely paralleling in most respects the Chicano's view of the Republic. Much more depressed than the Chicano, the Mexican is unable to provide overt assistance across the frontier for advancing cultural pluralism and equal opportunity in the United States. Even with such an ability, would private or public Mexican groups choose to intervene in affairs to the north when power ratios remain extended and dismal problem sectors continue to exist in Mexico? In conclusion and in similarity with the Mexican American, no "special relationship" presently is held by Mexicans toward Chicanos and the near future presents little indication that a stronger association will develop.

Analysis and Conclusions

Mexico has offered the Chicano very little direct assistance toward attaining the rights of pluralism and opportunity

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op. cit. "Mexicans, Chicanos Have Too Few Common Interests,"

in the United States. The average Mexican is poverty-stricken and preoccupied with physical survival, his government is largely disinterested in Mexican Americans, and the inter-American political scene likewise is not conducive to intervention in the affairs of his neighbors to the north. Furthermore, the Chicano has not seriously sought the Republic's direct support. Instead, Chicanos have absorbed themselves in their own local problems and programs. Apparently there exists sufficient promise in these activities to show a lack of regard in the concerns and possible contributions of Mexicans. And even if Mexican Americans are not over-coming difficulties in the United States, they cannot appeal to their former homeland for relief because of the cultural, financial, and political handicaps besetting them. As a result, racial, cultural, economical, and political factors continue to separate the two peoples, and recently these gaps appear to have widened.

What, then, can the Chicano gain from the presence of Mexico? First, the Republic represents a cultural image or symbol upon which to anchor the Hispanic-mestizo part of the Mexican American personality. For without the clear presence of Mexico, the Mexican American may submerge into a "melting pot" similar to that which earlier consumed other ethnically distinct peoples in this country, and the dual objectives of cultural pluralism and equal opportunity could lose their

vitality. Therefore, the ethnic anchor of the Republic symbolizes a hope and provides a model for those Chicanos interested in retaining this heritage.

Whether or not the Mexican American can resist acculturation and establish himself as a distinct personality has yet to be determined. Few immigrant peoples in United States history who did not reflect northern European values have easily retained their ancestors' identities. The path for Mexican Americans to achieve ethnic distinctiveness likewise will be extremely difficult to travel successfully. And strewn in the way are the economic and other hardships endured by all immigrants which press Chicanos into Anglo American life in order to support themselves. In similarity to other such groups, the country of origin, Mexico, may not offer the Chicano a sufficiently strong magnetic force to reverse the assimilation tendency.

Second, the Chicano might utilize his cross-national identity as a counterpoise between Anglo America and Latin America. For instance, a significant deterioration in Mexican American living conditions may seriously embarrass United States relations with hemispheric republics as well as Third World nations. A related possibility could involve the forming of separatist, or even terrorist, movements which, by being located near the border, would create significant international tensions.

The chance that these counterpoise factors appreciably may advance Chicano aspirations appears to be very remote, however. For one thing, it is difficult presently to imagine intentional policies aimed at seriously lowering the standards for any ethnic group in the United States. Current programs, in fact, are attempting to do the opposite. Furthermore, there is no strong indication that hemispheric republics and other less developed countries would respond sympathetically to the Chicano if such discrimination did transpire. 34

Third, conceivably Mexico and the remaining Latin American countries might change their images and policies in ways which may directly benefit Mexican Americans. For example, the stereotypes commonly attributed to Mexicans, which usually are derogatory, also are associated with Chicanos and hence adversely affect the stature and confidence of their North American brothers. But can long-held ethnic images change easily? Or should they be revised? For among a majority of citizens of this country Mexico can attain a more "respectable"

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For example, Robert Tucker believes United States vital interests largely lie outside of the so-called Third World and Latin America. He estimates that no matter what this country's foreign policies or the make-up of less developed areas' governments, many of these states are becoming more dependent upon United States assistance instead. See Tucker's A New Isolationism: Threat or Promise? (New York: Universe Books, 1972). If these opinions hold true, the Chicano is not a vital consideration within these relationships.

identity only when it more closely resembles the United States. Accordingly, this will be achieved after it becomes more modern, when extensive industrial progress occurs, and its population reflects European traits.³⁵ These modifications obviously are not attainable in the near future, if ever, given present racial compositions and the great variety of socio-economic obstacles to modernization which must be overcome. Hence, the Republic's image cannot improve sufficiently to further the Chicano's cause.

Furthermore, Mexican leaders might more forcefully advocate Mexican American objectives. For example, the government could issue official protests against discrimination of Chicanos. It might augment its own cultural influences in the southwestern states and actively promote Mexican American nationalism. Land grant appeals could be endorsed before the United Nations and the Organization of American States. Nonetheless, would the Mexican government be willing or able to undertake these different tactics? Indeed, more forceful pro-Chicano initiatives by Mexican authorities are far from likely, after one considers the Republic's traditional policies of non-intervention and more importantly its

³⁵ This is the contention of Robert A. Scalapino, who cites the example of United States stereotypes toward the Chinese and the Japanese which reversed in favor of the latter once industrialization occurred. See his "Race Relations and United States Policy in Asia," in Shepard, op. cit., 100-131.

fear of United States economic and military retaliations after any such interference.

There is little present likelihood that Mexico or the other countries of Latin America can improve substantially the prospects of Chicanos. Mexican American gains must come from within the United States. For neither cultural pluralism nor equal opportunity in this instance are international-scope questions.³⁶ Both objectives intrinsically pertain to conditions in this country. And while there continues to be evidence that they are attainable goals, the Chicano and the Anglo American, and not citizens of republics to the south, represent the main repositories for their realization.

Much of the motivation for creating a better society for all ethnic peoples must come from the non-Chicano community. For example, federal and local programs aimed at reducing any type of discrimination are beneficial and can be promoted from within the general political structure. Anglo Americans can continue to support Mexican American cultural activities as well as socio-economic and educational

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In contrast Black leaders in this country argue that discrimination is a global struggle. Only when racism is eradicated everywhere, they contend, will a total victory in the United States be achieved. See for example C. Eric Lincoln, "The Race Problem and International Relations," 39-58 and James Moss, "The Civil Rights Movement and American Foreign Policy," 79-97 in Shepard, op. cit. This author has not noticed similar contentions made by Chicanos.

self-help projects for minorities. More subjectively, all citizens must attack vigorously all forms of special privilege, from both moral and practical perspectives.

A further method for advancing these objectives is to upgrade our relationship with Mexico and the whole of Latin America. While our foreign policies primarily reflect security interests, the United States also tends to maintain closer ties with those nations whose culture resembles Anglo American traditions, and more distant associations with countries possessing contrasting ethnic appearances. These ethnically selective foreign approaches which neglect the Latin Americans should be reversed if Chicanos and other minorities in this country are to be assisted in preserving or rediscovering their previous non-North American heritages.

In a practical sense, Mexican Americans must be encouraged to enter the Foreign Service and other agencies which plan and implement United States associations with Latin America. Armando Rendon maintains that this country would be advantaged in several ways by more intensely and constructively utilizing the potential offered by Mexican Americans in this foreign policy area. Being of both worlds, he states, "Chicanos can approach the crisis of races which torments America as the single group in the nation which represents, with our brother raza, broad racial and cultural integration." Rendon asserts that the Mexican American "is

that latent bond between the peoples of the Western Hemisphere, because already he embodies the two worlds of the North and South American continents." Before this bridging of hemispheric races can be established, however, the United States must first assure the Mexican American his rights and status within this country, a feat which "will be a major step by Anglo-America to move beyond itself into a communion with the world nations, free of paranoia or the delusions of being policeman for the world." ³⁶ Therefore, Chicano participation in diplomacy would reduce the alleged ethnocentrism in United States policies toward less industrialized, racially dissimilar countries and would advance the practical aspects of relations with Latin America. In like manner, increased Chicano involvement in American foreign affairs might well augment the prestige and the confidence of the Mexican American community.

Ultimately, of course, the attainment of cultural pluralism and equal opportunity depends upon the Mexican American. Today, Chicanos are exploring their own human essence, and each person individually is setting his or her own pace, determining his own method and the extent of his endeavor. When one observes the dedication of some sectors of the movement, it is encouraging to note progress in relating

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Rendon, op. cit., 280, 304-306.

the presence of Mexico and the traditions of Chicanos to the problems encountered in this country. For example, students today speak more Spanish than in several years past, they are becoming more aware of the richness of Mexican and Mexican American heritages, and they are more assertive in demanding the rights of citizens under the United States system of governance. These and other signs indeed may indicate an upswing of momentum among Chicanos, particularly the young, for reversing past trends in acculturation.

In contrast, many Chicanos, unlike Black and Native Americans, can and do assimilate easily into Anglo American life. This, of course, is their right. However, this process also works against the forces striving to achieve a pluralist community, for persons who are successful in the present system also tend to be those who have foresaken many of their former Mexican traits.³⁷ Perhaps in many

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This contention is influenced by the ideas of Carl Degler, Neither Black Nor White (New York: Macmillan, 1970). Degler, comparing Black slavery and post-slavery discrimination in Brazil and the United States, argues that Black movements in this country are advantaged by the inability of individual Black Americans to assimilate totally into White society. This block against widespread social-economic mobility has kept Blacks more unified and has prevented their leadership from becoming integrated with Whites. Although the Mexican American is not considered, this author believes the Degler book is important because, in these ways, the Chicano is not similar to the Black, and can assimilate and assume an Anglo American status much more easily.

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cases they became successful because they choose assimilation. Chicano leadership talent and organizational strength in resisting acculturation, however, is weakened by these cleavages. This is a dilemma which poses a very serious challenge to the Mexican American.

How the Chicano approaches his assimilation problem is crucial, for it appears the processes of acculturation are accelerating despite valiant efforts by some toward reversal. While continuing endeavors toward attaining cultural pluralism and equal opportunity are being and will be made within the domestic setting, a stronger association between Chicanos and Mexicans assuredly offers another essential method of achieving the objectives of pluralism and opportunity. That is, Chicanos somehow must establish a psychological if not an actual bond with the present reality of Mexican culture and use this bond as an asset in reaching the goals they have set in this country.

That Mexican Americans voluntarily or involuntarily have neglected ties with Mexico in the past has tended to cause their own assimilation into Anglo American culture, for the Chicano is a unique blend of Mexican and United States traditions. The gradual disappearance of Mexican culture encourages the English-speaking imbalance which apparently now threatens the Chicano's pursuit of a separate

identity. Therefore, Chicanos have much to gain by associating more closely with the Republic's traditions and with its present conditions.

More specifically, several of Mexico's potential contributions could be listed. For instance, many Mexican Americans currently lack a clear definition of chicanismo. In order to clarify this confused image, the culture of Mexico can lend insights not only into the nature of the movement but perhaps also into the more appropriate future directions to follow which might reverse acculturation in this country. Knowledge of Mexican heritages also offers Chicanos confidence and justifications, both for achieving and maintaining pluralism, and beyond this, for establishing a more positive and equal relationship with Anglo America.

Consequently, for these and for similar reasons, it would be advantageous for Mexican Americans to take a more active role in forging stronger ties between themselves and Latin Americans. Actual steps could be taken in showing support for these peoples and the hardships many of them presently endure, such as more assertively lobbying for official United States policies which might benefit Latin America, encouraging Chicano and other community organizations to disseminate information about Mexico, soliciting funds and provisions for inter-American relief causes, and

providing improved treatment for legal and illegal Mexican-Latin American workers and students in the United States. ³⁸

Mexican Americans could play a major role in satisfactorily resolving the illegal Mexican immigration issue, for instance, in ways which would not be detrimental to the Mexican worker. Increasingly, the alien poses a serious problem to the Chicano. The usually-depressed state of the Mexican laborer who crosses the border continues to plague Chicanos because not only does the immigrant diminish wages and employment benefits for this country's workers but also he carries a destitute appearance which becomes associated with Mexican Americans as well. Moreover, public and official opposition to illegal aliens is growing, especially during the present high unemployment conditions and recession. Consequently, restrictions imposed on these persons in the United States may place re-

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Very few examples of Chicano concern for Mexicans are evident. Assistance for legal and illegal workers from Latin American countries already in the United States is provided by migrant councils, legal service bureaus, welfare agencies and similar organizations which advise these persons of their rights in wage, justice, welfare, and other situations. Recent pending federal legislation (see below) may restrict these contacts between Mexicans and Chicanos, however. In other instances, Chicano students and community groups near the frontier occasionally contribute to nearby Mexican orphanages, charitable ventures, and similar causes; nevertheless, most Chicano resources must remain north of the border because their funds are limited and first priority is given to local projects.

ciprocal limitations upon Mexican Americans because of similar appearances and employment specialties between Chicanos and Mexicans, as the Rodino bill opponents charge. 39

A serious void presently exists in objective research and analysis about Mexican Americans--their past in Mexico and the United States, the extent and causes of acculturation, methods for avoiding the erosion of cultures, and the improvement and expansion of public and private equal opportunity programs. Much Chicano literature is repetitious and superficial and many valuable graduate school theses relating to these subjects do not circulate widely. Chicanos could emphasize pertinent research and possibly make extensive advances for attaining the objectives of pluralism and opportunity. For only when problems are

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The Rodino bill is intended to restrict the entry of illegal workers to the United States by imposing penalties upon employers who knowingly hire such aliens. The bill also orders employees of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and employees of state offices under the Social Security Act who assist unlawful immigrants to disclose aliens' names and addresses to the Naturalization and Immigration Service. Critics allege, however, that beside discriminating against Mexicans and Latin Americans, this measure also may discriminate against Mexican Americans as well due to their similarity in culture and appearance to Mexicans and, in some cases, to Chicanos' lack of citizenship documentation. Likewise, by being forced to accede to these restraints, the Chicano is further set apart from the peoples to the south when he is forced by law to report on the presence and activities of illegal aliens with whom he comes into contact.

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isolated and thoroughly analyzed can solutions be made possible.

Lastly, Chicanos should discard their attitudes of cultural inferiority toward Mexico, which in part may be a source of their negativism and disinterest in Latin America. Such cultural difference is not correct and it inhibits a closer relationship from emerging between the two peoples. Furthermore, Mexican Americans should feel less guilty for comparatively higher living standards than Mexicans now possess. Chicanos who are imbued with pride in their past traditions and current achievements can convince brother raza of Latin America that despite differences, all Hispanic-mestizo peoples of America contribute a common humanistic approach for resolving the plight of disadvantaged persons throughout the world.

In conclusion, success in preserving cultural distinctiveness and in providing equal rights will depend partly upon the Chicano's uniqueness as a multinational person. The presence of Mexico is of utmost importance for this endeavor. However, the relationship the Chicano has found with the southern republic has been complex and ambiguous, and he has largely ignored this cultural asset for attaining his objectives in this country. The Mexican American should initiate a new and more positive association with Mexico and other Latin American republics. Individually he should

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blend the best of all ethnic traditions, removing obstacles which inhibit the attainment of his objectives. Pressures for ethnic conformity must be replaced by tolerant and compassionate understanding.